

The National Center for Physical Activity and Disability (NCPAD) is implementing a Illinois Department of Transportation Safe Routes to School Program (SRTS) program that will include children of all abilities. NCPAD has partnered with Solomon School, a Chicago Public School to pilot an inclusive SRTS programs in Illinois.

Concerns exist for the well being of children. Children today are walking and biking to school less than in past generations. The consequence has been a decrease in activity for youth, an increase in childhood obesity, an increase in automobile use, and an increase in automobile pollution. SRTS has developed a national strategy to increase the safety and physical activity among youth to address these concerns to promote a healthier, more active lifestyle for elementary school-age children that will stay with them throughout their entire life. It is essential that this strategy include children with disabilities because they are at a greater risk for inactivity than children without disabilities.

Solomon Elementary School is taking a proactive approach to wellness that includes all students. Solomon participated in the International Walk & Wheel to School Day in October 2008 and has continued keeping children active with Walking and Wheeling Wednesdays. Walking and Wheeling Wednesdays is a program each Wednesday that students travel around the school at the beginning of the school day. The Chicago winter and city-wide test preparations presented challenges for the students to continue participating in the program.

To shake off the winter blues and get the school back in action, Solomon School and the National Center on Physical Activity and Disability (NCPAD) developed a Sports Day. The goal of Sports Day was to provide an inclusive event for all students to be more physically active and learn about safe pedestrian travel.

Solomon School SRTS Sports Day involved three hundred and ninety students of all abilities rotating through activity stations which included Adaptive cycling, Wheelchair Sports, Parachute Games, Nature activities, Pedometer tracking instruction and pedestrian safety. Sports Day was a collaboration of Solomon School, NCPAD, Project Mobility, Chicago Park District, Active Transportation Alliance, and Safe Routes Ambassadors. Organizations that came together to teach educate, enable and encourage students, parents, and school staff on the inclusion of students with disabilities in a Safe Routes to School Walk and Wheel program to foster a healthy lifestyle for all children

The success of the event was heard in the remarks from students commenting on how they wanted to use the adaptive cycles in the grand finale parade and how much fun it was to spin in the racing wheelchair. The ultimate goal of this program is to develop a guide to help students, school staff and parents with the inclusion of children of all abilities in the SRTS program. However, inclusion is something that really can not be forced. True inclusion is a value that is shared by everyone. Sports Day was one small step towards a school and a community that embraces the importance of all children and their need to lead active lifestyles traveling to and from school as well as to promote positive interactions with students of all abilities to develop friendships for social inclusion.





